



Supply Chain & Staffing Shortage

Child nutrition program professionals and school staff work hard to ensure nutritious meal options for students across Wisconsin. Supply chain disruptions and staff shortages are making the process of providing nutritious meals challenging. This document provides resources and tips for success from the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction (DPI), and School Food Authorities (SFAs).

USDA

Waivers and Flexibilities

USDA is offering flexibilities in response to public health needs and to ease administrative burden, while still promoting nutritious meals. The resources below cover flexibilities in a table, summarized, and in practice.

- [Summary of Flexibilities](#)
- [Table of Flexibilities](#)
- [Flexibilities in Practice](#)

Supply Chain

- [Planning for a Dynamic School Environment During School Year 2021-22: Supply Chain Issues | USDA-FNS Webpage](#) offers many helpful resources.
- Watch the [Procurement Strategies for School Year 2021-2022: Webinar for School Food Authorities](#) for a discussion about school meal procurement strategies and USDA school meal program flexibilities, waivers, and training resources for School Year 2021-22.
- Access the [Geographic Preference Fact Sheet](#) to learn how geographic preference can be used to purchase local foods.
- Take a look at the recently released USDA Bulletin: [Making Last-Minute Substitutions to Your School Meal Menu](#).

DPI

Local Foods

- Connecting with local farmers through the [Wisconsin Local Foods Database](#) may help bridge supply chain gaps.

- Check out the [Farm To School Webpage](#) for more information.
- Explore ways indigenous and traditional foods of Wisconsin can be used in your school nutrition programs by visiting the [Traditional Foods Webpage](#).

Menu Planning

Below are ready-to-go menus and recipes for all grade levels.

- [Cycle Menus: Let's Cook, Wisconsin School Meals Rock](#)
- [Get Creative with Meat/Meat Alternates](#)
- [International Recipes \(Dairy Farmers of Wisconsin\)](#)
- [New School Cuisine Cookbook: Nutritious and Seasonal Recipes for School Cooks, by School Cooks](#)

Meal Pattern

SFAs that participate in the SSO must follow the SBP and NSLP meal pattern requirements unless they have an approved meal pattern waiver. SSO [Meal Pattern Flexibility Request](#) expires June 30, 2022.

Use the [SSO Family Letter for Menu Changes Template \(Spanish\)\(Hmong\)](#) to alert families of changes to your menus this school year.

Normally, senior high schools must participate in [Offer Versus Serve](#) at lunch. For SY 2021-22, this requirement has been waived to support safe access to meals and allow for individually plated or pre-packaged meals at all grade levels. You must indicate on the SY 2021-22 Program Operations Application (PoA) that you have implemented this waiver flexibility.

If your SFA cannot get a supply of fluid milk due to an emergency, please submit an Inadequate Fluid Milk Supply Request within 2 business days to the School Nutrition Team. The link to request can be found under the Milk heading on the [Meal Pattern Components Webpage](#). Your request will be reviewed by a member of the School Nutrition Team. Upon review and approval, meals served without the milk component can be claimed for reimbursement under the USDA's child nutrition programs.

Procurement

- [Ways to Use Wisconsin Processed Products](#)
- [Brown Box & Wisconsin Processed Foods in the Cycle Menu](#)
- [USDA Product Information](#)

Emergency Procurement

Emergency procurement may be used when a public emergency does not allow time for a competitive procurement. Standard competitive procurement processes such as reaching out to multiple vendors, posting a solicitation for bids, or awarding based on lowest cost are not required.

Emergency procurement simply involves contacting potential vendors, explaining your situation, and determining if the price is "reasonable". SFAs must plan for and

develop a timeline to conduct a competitive procurement for future purchases once the emergency ends. Emergency contracts cannot be renewed. For more information, visit the [Procurement Webpage](#). Retain records of communications and contracts related to the procurement including:

- Contractor/supplier name
- Contractor/supplier contact information and address
- Contractor/supplier name of person supplying pricing
- Purchase amount/contract value
- Description of product and/or service being purchased/contracted
- If applicable, duration of contract (contract term)
- Reason for emergency
- Staffing

Labor Shortages

Encourage local companies, faith-based groups, college clubs, or corporations to donate time and talent as volunteers. All volunteers must sign an employee health reporting agreement and take the [Civil Rights](#) and basic [Food Safety](#) training. Keep these training records on-file at the SFA. Visit the [Webcasts Webpage](#) for online training links.

If you are coordinating groups of volunteers, sending training materials ahead of time can reduce on-site training. Make sure all volunteers feel welcome, are well-trained, and matched with tasks that are appropriate to their ability and experience. Volunteers who have a positive and fulfilling experience are more likely to return.

Students may gain work experience in the school food programs. Please consult the [Wisconsin Employment of Minors Guide](#) from the Department of Workforce Development for details.

Contact local workforce development agencies, job training, and staffing agencies for permanent and temporary staff.

Hold a (COVID-safe) jobs fair to introduce potential staff to school food service opportunities and answer questions.

SFA

These tips and tricks were submitted by school nutrition professionals across Wisconsin. Share tips, resources, and ask questions with other Wisconsin School Nutrition Professions by sending an email to dpifns@dpi.wi.gov requesting to join.

Connect with local businesses:

- Develop a relationship with local grocers and restaurants. They may have more products available.
- Seek out whole grain products such as buns, bread, and pizza crusts from local bakeries.

Work directly with suppliers/manufacturers:

- Ask what they have available on a weekly basis.
- Consider alternatives such as:
 - Different color and size trays, plates without compartments, bowls, and heavy-duty plates instead of trays. You can use plastic baskets with parchment paper liners.
 - If what you want is not available ask “what do you have.”
 - If a supplier has excess of something, consider purchasing and storing. Rent a storage space if necessary. Ensure that all food storage is in-line with food safety regulations.
 - Items such as ‘walking tacos’ can be served using the bag as the container.
 - Mix canned fruit into gelatin to reduce spills in to-go meals.

Good Communication:

- Reach out to other school departments to see if they can help.
- Maintain good communication with school administration, staff, students, and parents.

Prioritization:

- Offer fresh produce as this may be more readily available than canned or frozen.
- Explain you may not have student favorites and may need to put ‘fun’ things on hold to make sure students have healthy, balanced meals each day.

Staff Shortages:

- Encourage administrators and faculty to volunteer their time and talents.
- Hire high school students. They can do everything from cooking, food prep, dishes, and washing tables, etc. They can often work during the school day on breaks and study hall.



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1. mail: U.S. Department of Agriculture
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Civil Rights
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, D.C. 20250-9410;
2. fax: (202) 690-7442; or
3. email: program.intake@usda.gov.

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